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SUBJECT: UNGA VOTING INSTRUCTION: SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE
EAST; QUESTION OF PALESTINE

REF: STATE 123018

SUBJECT: UNGA Voting Instruction: Situation in the Middle
East; Question of Palestine

[¶](#)1. This is an action request. See paragraph 2.

[¶](#)2. USDel is instructed to vote against the following six
UNGA resolutions under the agenda items 15, "The Situation
in the Middle East," and 16, "Question of Palestine."
USDel may call for a vote on any of these resolutions if
no other member does so, and should deliver the
Explanation of Vote at paragraph 3 in conjunction with the
later item.

-- "Jerusalem;"

-- "The Syrian Golan;"

-- "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of
the Palestinian People;"

-- "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat;"

-- "Special Information Programme on the Question of
Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the
Secretariat;" and

-- "Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine."

[¶](#)3. EOv on the Agenda Item "Question of Palestine": Mr.
Chairman. The four resolutions under this agenda item -- in
combination with over fifteen other resolutions that will come
before the General Assembly this year, as every year -- form a
clear pattern of institutional bias directed at one member
state of the United Nations.

The United States has clearly stated our policy that there
should be two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living
side by side in peace and security. We back up our policy
by substantial diplomatic support for both sides consistent
with the process launched in Annapolis in November 2007. We
also contribute very significant financial and programmatic
support to the Palestinian Authority and to Palestinian
refugees, for whom the United States is the largest single-
state donor.

We see no contradiction whatsoever between support for
the Palestinian people and support for Israel. Both sides
need support to be able to take the steps necessary for a
just and lasting peace.

Each year, therefore, we are appalled and discouraged
as the UN General Assembly unhelpfully takes up a
disproportionate number of resolutions related to the
Middle East -- all unbalanced by their explicit or
implicit one-sided criticism of Israel.

Mr. Chairman, the resolutions discussed under this and other upcoming agenda items entitled the "Situation in the Middle East," the "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Effecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People," the "Permanent Sovereignty of the Palestinian People" and others are repetitive and unbalanced. They are completely unlike the General Assembly's action with respect to any other member state, geographic area, or issue. They place demands on the Israeli side while failing to acknowledge that both sides have obligations and must take difficult steps towards peace that can only be resolved through negotiations between the parties.

The United States accepts the principle that the General Assembly may look into the practices of individual states. However, last year the Assembly adopted fourteen resolutions specifically critical of Israel, and seven more expressing support for the Palestinian people vis-a-vis their relationship to Israel. In that same year, the Assembly adopted only six resolutions specifically critical of any member state other than Israel; we supported some of these and opposed others. All told, the 21 resolutions addressing alleged Israeli violations and obligations took up 61 pages of text, compared to 20 pages for resolutions critical of the six other nations. The Assembly is on a course to follow the same pattern again this year.

Mr. Chairman, whatever the merits of the issue, this represents an extraordinarily disproportionate and unjustified focus on one member state. The situation in the Middle East is an important matter, but looked at in relation to the overall problems facing the planet, this matter does not warrant three-quarters of the time and energy the General Assembly devotes to critical review of the actions of its 192 member states.

Of particular concern to the United States are two resolutions adopted today -- the "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat" and the "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People," and one that will be considered under agenda item 30, the "Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories."

These entities, established more than a generation ago, perpetuate and institutionalize the perception of inherent UN bias. By their very nature, they fail to properly demand actions from both sides, only Israel. The millions of dollars expended on them and significant staff contributions towards them could be better directed to more pressing needs, including direct assistance to needy Palestinians.

The time has come for the Assembly to review these bodies in light of their actual contribution, or lack thereof, towards a solution to the conflict in the Middle East, consistent with the overall program for UN reform.

Mr. Chairman, these institutional arrangements, backed by nearly two dozen one-sided resolutions, serve more to undercut than to assist ongoing negotiations. They undermine the credibility of the UN, which, as a member of the Quartet, must be seen by both sides as an honest broker in facilitating a resolution to the Middle East conflict.

They have no positive effect in helping to achieve a just resolution of the conflict. Indeed, they can have a serious corrosive effect both by convincing many on the Israeli side that they will be treated unfairly by the UN no matter what compromises they may offer, and by convincing extremist elements on the Palestinian side such as Hamas, that they will not be criticized no matter what they do, up to and including terrorist attacks intentionally targeting civilians. Certainly, they add nothing to the far more

detailed, up-to-date monthly discussions of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East.

Finally, these resolutions presuppose the outcome of permanent status issues, such as the return of refugees, checkpoints, and settlement activity, that properly belong in ongoing bilateral negotiations. In their November 9 briefing to the Quartet, the Palestinian and Israeli negotiators pledged to continue bilateral talks until they achieve their goal of a comprehensive agreement on all issues, without exception, as agreed at Annapolis. Both sides attested the negotiating structure is effective and productive and they intend to keep it in place. They noted, I wish to emphasize, that third parties should not intervene in the negotiations absent the joint request of both parties.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is acutely aware of the suffering of the Palestinian people. We have been and will continue to be at the forefront of international efforts to address the underlying causes. But it is impossible to see how supporting resolutions so detached from the reality on the ground, and so intrusive into the substance of sensitive, ongoing negotiations, will either alleviate that suffering or contribute to a solution. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
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